

SOVIET LEADERSHIP

The consistency of the USSR's current tactics indicates at least agreement on broad policy within the Kremlin. Beneath this agreement, however, there have recently been some signs of uneasy tension and political maneuvering within the delicately balanced top leadership. The best example was the recent condemnation of L. G. Melnikov, one of the fourteen man ruling presidium, and his subsequent ouster as First Secretary of the Ukraine. He was criticized for incorrect administration of the Ukraine's Western areas which have been a haven for small resistance groups and a general trouble spot ever since the Soviet Union acquired them as a result of the war. Apparently, Melnikov was also out of step with the new regime's present policy of soft pedaling Stalin's policy of Russifying minorities.

His place appears to have been taken by V. A. Malyshev, who appeared with eleven of the presidium members at the Bolshoi Theatre on the evening of 27 June. Malyshev is minister of Transport and Heavy Machine Building and an important member of the Technical bureaucracy. He is a representative of the younger group of Soviet administrators who have been trained in the hard school

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of profit and loss calculations.

What may prove far more significant than this shift, however, was L. P. Beria's absence from the performance that evening.

Some Western observers have speculated that he is being forced to take the blame for a security system which permitted the East German riots, and manifestations of unrest elsewhere in Eastern Europe such as Czechoslovakia . His failure to appear with his cohorts on this occasion, however, is by no means conclusive proof that he has lost face or power. He might well be personally supervising the restoration of control in Germany. Furthermore, in Stalin's day, it was not unusual for one or more leaders to miss even more important State occasions.

Beria's hand as USSR MVD chief appeared to be still visible throughout the month of June, when four ministerial shifts in the Republic MVD's raised to nine the number of new MVD ministers appointed since Stalin's death. Five of the replaced ministers had risen to power under S. D. Ignatiev, the chief scapegoat for the "doctors' plot." In any case, we are watching the situation very closely for other signs which might clarify his status and that of the other leaders.

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In addition to Melnikov and Beria, presidium member M. D. A. Bagirov was also absent. However, it is likely that he remains for the most part in Azerbaijan where he is chairman of the Council of Ministers and head of the Party Buro.

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